SMILE

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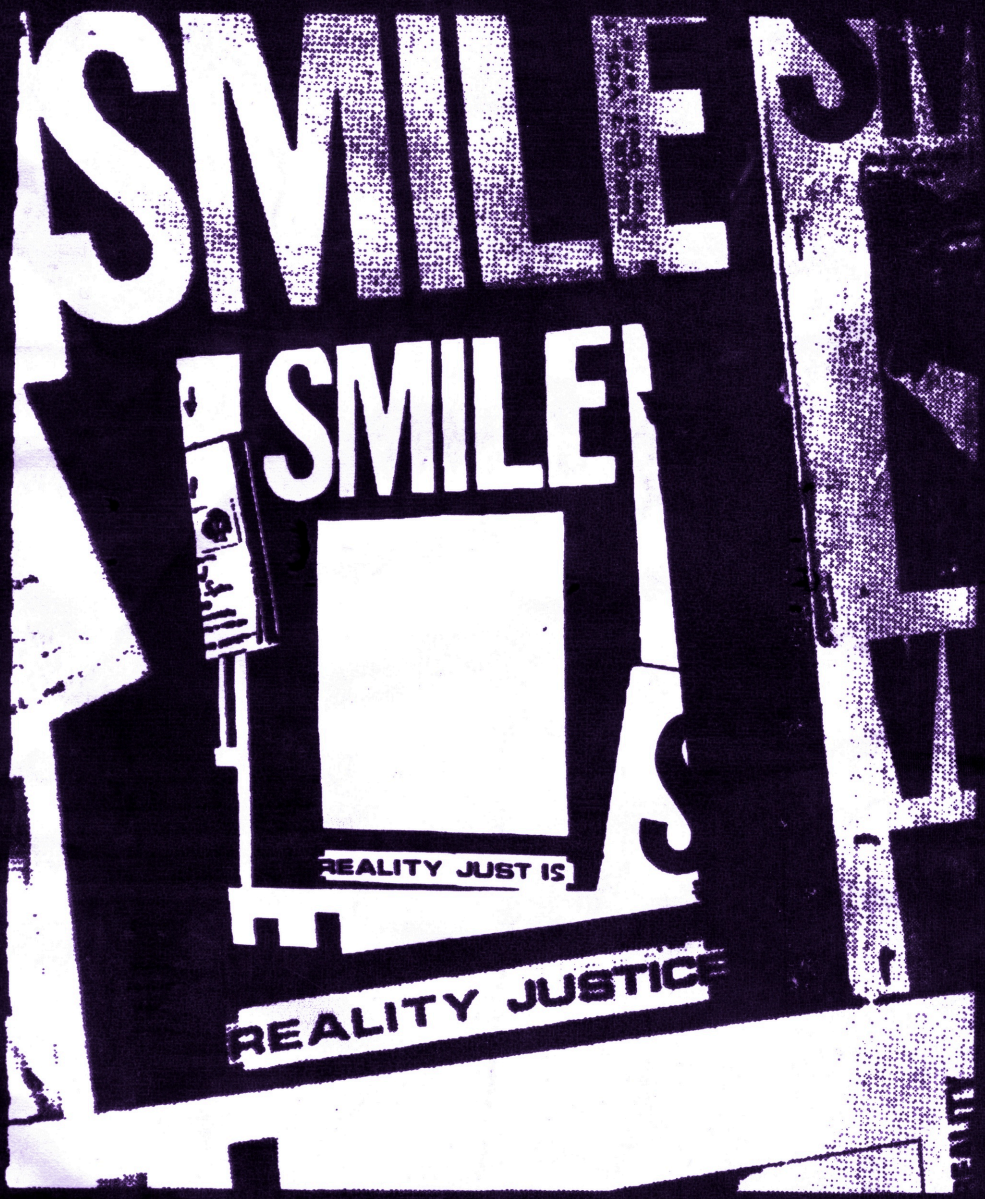
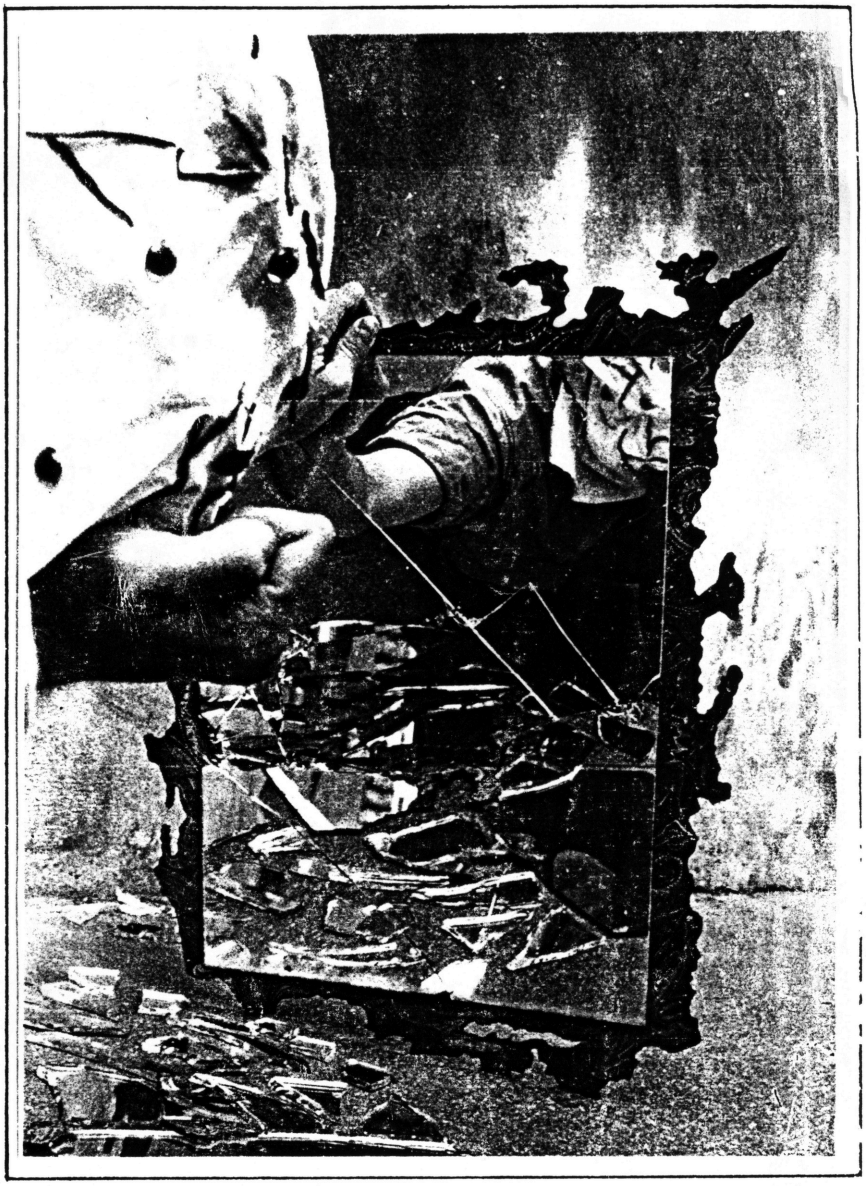


REALITY ADJUSTMENT

SMILE

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENTERTAINMENT AND REVOLUTION.

THE NAME IS FIXED,
THE KINDS OF MAGAZINES
USING IT AREN'T.



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THANKS TO RHINEHEART SEVOL,
HE SPITTER, DR. AL
CKERMAN, KAREN ELIOT
ND BERNARD PILCHER FOR THEIR
FREQUENTLY UNINTENTIONAL)
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Today the thing to remember is what takes place between somet&ing... and itself. Nevertheless, we were-that some-that something...and we did not know it, wheras we know now, but we are it no longer....

-Bernard Pilcher

NEOISM IS TRUISM IS PLAGERISM IS NEOISM

Hello and welcome to the seventh issue of SMILE, an international magazine devoted to the concrete adjustment of physical reality. The eigth issue of SMILE (available from KAREN ELIOT) contained a devastating critique of the NEOIST CULTURAL CONSPIRACY, a critique so persuasive that it invalidated the last remnants of the once important NEOIST movement. Because this issue of SMILE is directly concerned with NEOISTS and NEOISM we have chosen to give it the issue number 7. Our hope is that we will be remembered for our complex understanding of chronological practice and as having accepted the destruction of our movement from this obscure temporal angle. We will continue to be chronologically faithful to events 'as they occur' and we are fully aware that this process will be of great help to future art historians who will catalog NEOISM along with all of the other impotent 'art-movements' of the century and perhaps those to come. This is our SMILE.

ANTI-POST-ACTUALISM++++++

There are many places we could begin, the most obvious being to describe our previous activities or to create some defining catch phrase to explain NEOISM. Eventually we will seem guilty of both these approaches, although our guilt will be mined from a strong sense of contradiction. We have no history and in this sense we are not individuals. This 'timelessness' is the negative mirror of the 'timelessness of culture! If you want a vision of the future, imagine the past (artificially) extended forever. However, we wish to resist this situation. The most obvious reason for this is that is that we do not want to be controlled. As a corollary to this desire, we do not have any coherent ideology or sense of purpose. The most obvious reason for this is to experimentally determine whetherit is possible to live actively without a sense of purpose. Naturally, this situation prevents us from controlling one another. WE WANT WAR WITH YOU. JOIN US.

THE MEANING OF SPECIFIC SYMBOLS

The ordering of words is the ordering of conciousness. The authoritative program of culture and ideology requires a particular ordering of thought in its victims which is both 'rational' and 'specific', with a sense of 'truth' as its cornerstone. In order to maintain this situation, it is imperative that language clearly separate activites and objects into controllable fields of reference. For this reason we consider it imperative that all magazines be called SMILE, all activites be called NEOISM and all individuals adopt the specific names of MONTY CANTSIN or KAREN ELIOT.
The shifting referents of the post-modern condition will solidify under this experiment towards a pure language of practical confusion.
The conceptual art of the Seventies legitimized an increasing and ironic separation between 'art' and 'life'; a separation in which the apparent liberation of imagination is revealed on close inspection to be an exercise in (self) restraint. The 'idea', concieved but unrealized, is more easily controled than the commodity object: a restatement of the totalitarian dominance of 'social' 'reality' over 'personal' 'reality'

The practical inversion of this condition is tantamount to NEOISM. The 'conceptual' made social decentralizes control, increases confusion and becomes an 'act of will'. life becomes mythology- mythology becomes life.

REACTIONARIES will always mistake this refusal to participate in the artificialseparation between the 'rational' and 'irrational' for an inversion of the control structure of social relations. They will strengthen this misconception by attempting to show a historical line running from Lautremont onwards, and by this linear method avoiding the central paradox of such criticisms. 'Irrationality', discused 'rationally' will always fall short. It is only the rejection of this duality which can bring history into focus in time for its neccesary destruction.

THE DESTRUCTION OF MEANING AND THE ANSWER TO THE DESTRUCTION

ALIENATION

THE inclusion of the concept of 'Alienation' in the (pseudo) radical critiques of society is a clear indication of the extent to which these critiques have internalized the mechanisms for the propogation of power. 'Alienation' describes a set of sensations common to all individuals with the 'leisure time' to develope self-conciousness. The use of this word in the system of binary oppositions (language) suggests that an 'unalienated' condition is possible. Although this 'unalienated' culture may have historically existed during periods of zero leisure, to suggest that it is possible today is clearly a manifestation of the imperative (under capitalism) for the existence of an illusionary and unreachable 'better world' (The 'OTHER' of Glamour). Like Religion, which offers the lie of immortality, or fashion which presents a 'better life', the word 'alienation' is used to invert the 'painful reality' of 'life' through the promise of an illusionary 'cure'. 'Radicals' basing their critiques on this concept are self-defeating: the vain attempts to heal 'alienation' only serve to increase the separation between the 'image' of 'the self' and its 'reality'. Leisure is alienation.

PLAGERISM

Ideas improve. Plagerism implies it. The use of overt plagerism by 'art movements' like "The Generation Positive", "The Neoists" and "Praxis" does not, however, participate in this improvement. In the 'post-industrial' condition of information overload, the raw surplus of images, ideas and texts is so great that the selective process of chooosing what material to plagerize is as much a 'creative' act as the construction of the images, ideas and texts in the first place. If the aim of plagerism is to make a 'radical' break with 'creativity' and its 'commodity value', plagerists must give up the selection process and confine themselves to a 'Cagian' 'random method'. Since the introduction of 'random method' in no way prevents the use of the resulting materials for storage of excess 'value' (ART), a more appropriate action for consistent plagerists would be participation(sic) in the ARTIST STRIKE, meaning (at least) three years of inactivity(between 1990 and 1993). Only through complete inactivity can we purge ourselves of the capitalist values of 'originality' and 'creativity' manifested through 'ART' and its double, 'Plagerism'.

ESSENTIALISM

ESSENTAILISM, or the belief in a 'fundimental' 'truth' is 'valuable' only in terms of the process attempting to 'devine' this truth through our theoretico-critical activity. The huge surplus of images, ideas and texts which we will produce in this process will keep us extremely busy and thankfully save us from any real revelations.

GLISTENING COMMODITY

Enter the UNITARY PRESENT. It's FUN.

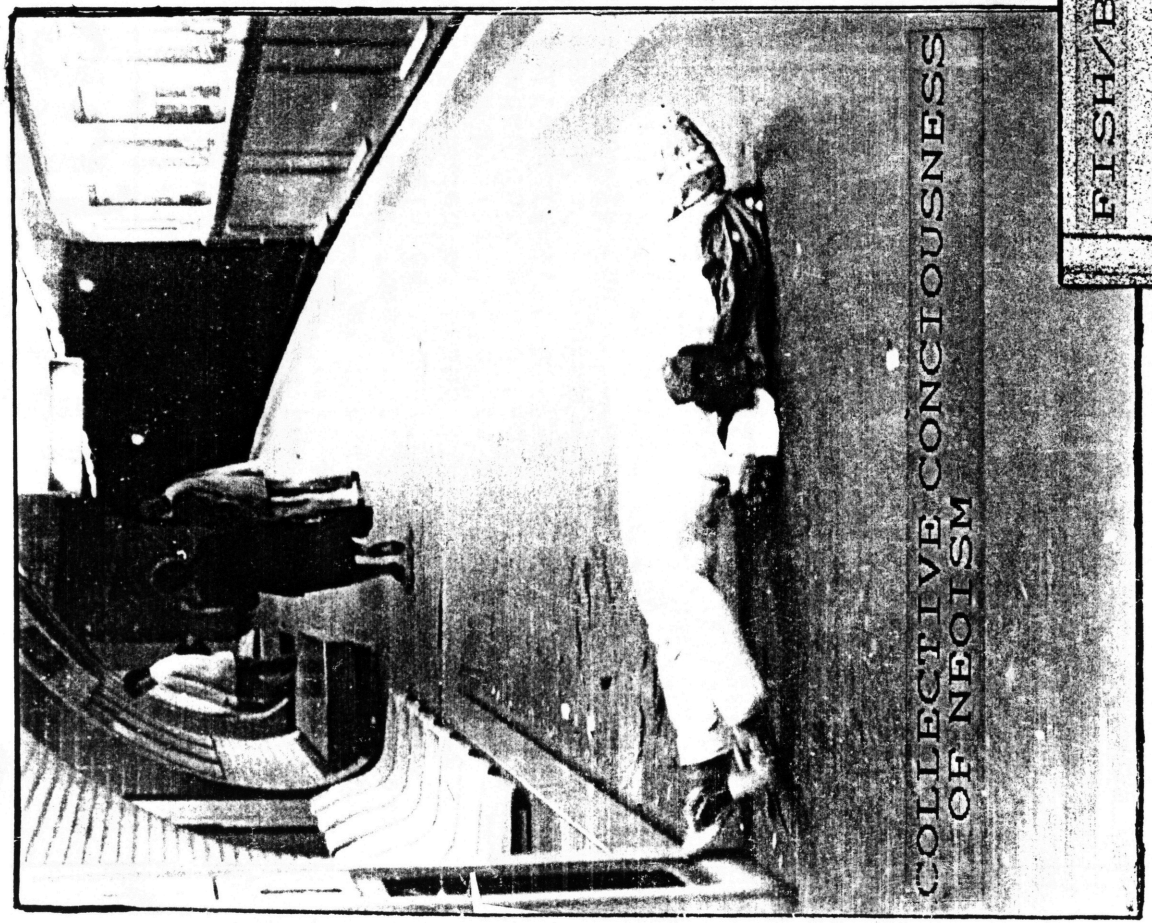
THE WHITE HEAD

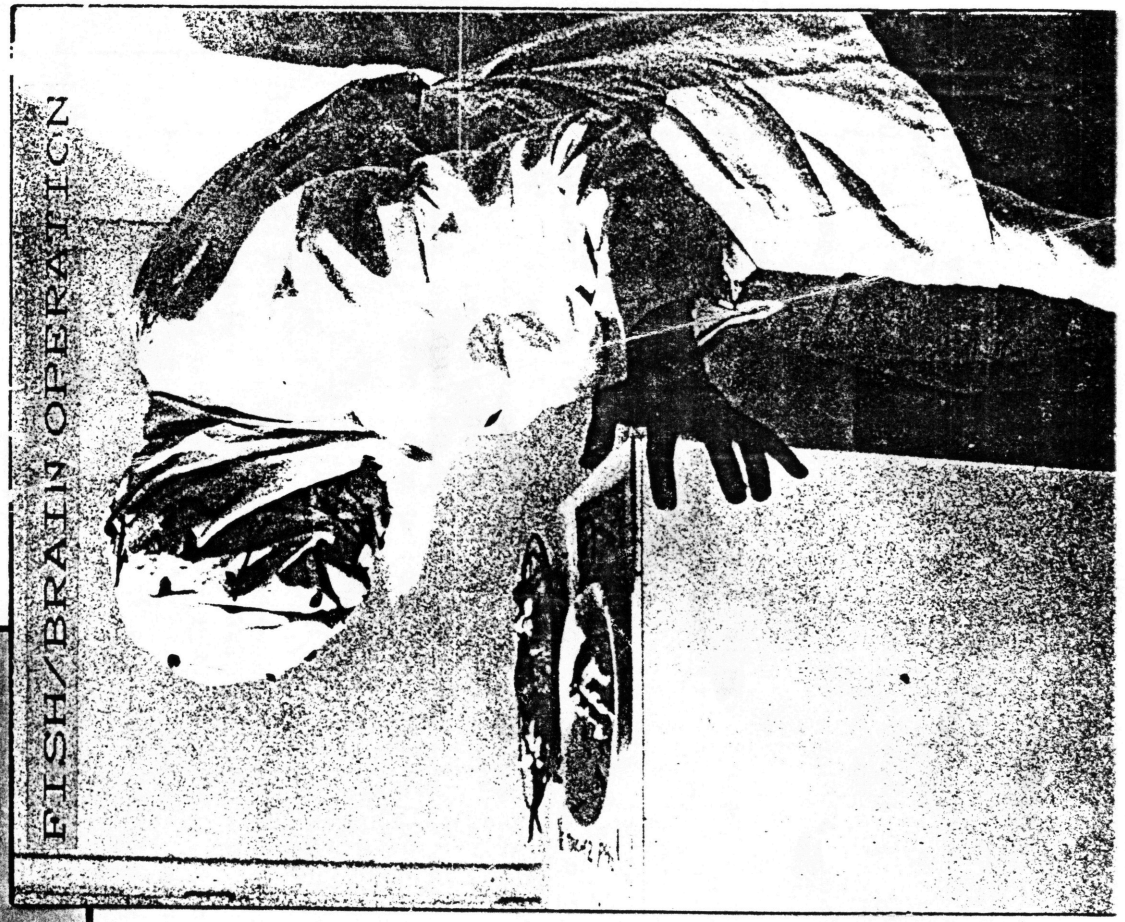
(NEOIST PERFORMANCE PEICE FOR JOHN BERNDT)

WHENEVER YOU MEET A NEOIST OR ONE WHO PROFESSES TO BE A NEOIST ETC PERFORM THE FOLLOWING:

(1) 5 or 10 minuites into the meeting say in a conversational tone "telephones and telephone bells have always made me uneasy." (Offer no explanation for this.)

(2) Shortly before the meeting ends say in a non-conversational tone, "Its head was...white ...all white." (Offer no explination for this.)





(3) Do this as many times a day as you like but always at least once a day; (if no Neoists are around, you can always pretend that the person you're talking to looks like a likely canidate for Neoisme.)

(5)At the end of your Neoist tour provide documentation to DR. Al Ackerman. (Offer no explanation for this, please.)

Al Ackerman, july 31, 1936

reality adjustment

LANGUAGE

In the Cabala and ancient Hebraic, each 'letter' represented a a numerical value and consequently each word had the 'value' of the 'sum' of its letters. Words with equal 'value' were also equal in 'meaning'. In practical terms, this meant that Cabala scholars were required to consider both the individual 'meaning' of each word of text and the 'meaning' of all words of a related 'numerical value'. This created a system of referentiality based on 'random' complexity, and like all cultural systems believed by its followers to be eternal.

This process is easily extended into present day conditions by assigning numerical values to letters (A=1, B=2, C=3 etc...). In any language a word will equal in 'meaning' a word with the inversion of its spelling, EG, in English "Won"="Now". In the same way "I am going shopping" has the same value and equivalent "meaning" as "Defenistration at Prauge".

In this way it is possible to determine the 'average' value of words- that is words whoes numerical value is equal to 13½ times their number of letters.

Ideally, global implementation of this system could take place by assigning 'values' to the phonemes common to most languages, although this process would create a Eurocentric bias by excluding languages like Xchosa (click based languages).

There are no spelling errors in this magazine.

PSYCHOLOGY

PHYSICS

In order to empirically derive a constant for "THE GRADUATED HOSTILITY OF THINGS", assemble a series of objects in relation to their 'value' to you and drop peices of toast and jam onto them, mechanically and from height of more than four feet. Record the frequency of Jam to Nonjam contact in order to derive a ratio of hostility in the universe. Obviously, this experiment can (and should) be performed in many ways, using many types of materials. Comparisons of general numerical trendsWill yeild a number equivalent to the value of oppression in the universe relative to human beings.

PHILOSOPHY

BACKROUND: In a previous life, Plato believed that he had been a bush. Pythagoras saw a similarity between the substance of his brain and his own semen.

Opposites are also illusion. The opposite inevitably is only 'slightly different' from its 'subject'. The face in the mirror is 'unfamiliar', but certainly not inverted. Polarity is of interest only when it is examined without a third point for reference. 'Formal' concerns are not in any way 'pure', they are the 'realization' that all 'purity' is imaginary, worthwhile, transparent.

POLITICS

To attack something is to justify it

CONTINUED FALSIFICATION

THIS MAGAZINE IS A COMMODITY, AND CONSEQUENTLY POLLUTED BY EXCHANGE.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THIS MAGAZINE IS THE RESULT OF INTELLECTUAL LABOUR A BOURGEOIS INVERSION OF THE INSIPID WORK ETHIC.

AN INTERNALIZATION OF THE DEMAND FOR OVERPRODUCTION UNDER CAPITAL AND CONSEQUENTLY THE RECUPERATION OF RADICALITY INTO A SPACE FOR SURPLUS VALUE.

SMASH THIS PEICE OF BOURGEOIS

MEDIOCRITY

5 4 4 7 4 4 2

SOME WORDS:

In the 'Post-Modern' condition there is no 'Truth', no 'referent for objectivity'. Under the influence of (internalized) authority, this 'disorienting situation becomes a crisis of legitimazation: the fruitless and fragmeneted search for an imaginary 'reality'. Everything is true, nothing is permitted, the ordering of words as the strict ordering of conciousness. The rejection of authority is the inversion of the 'crisis'- The 'Post-Modern condition' is the ripest time for self-actualization , the refusal of systematic 'objectivity' and impotence.

Pretend absolute sanity in a world gone completely mad.

WHAT IS THE NEXT EXPERIMENT

IN THE AGE OF

ARTIFICIALITY?

directly hopeless

England was very gloomy and the area around James Senior's house was extremely gray and inactive. I typed letters and took the tube down to victoria and then to piccadilli station. My host was reserved and seemed physically at odds with his rather extreme ideas. John Duncan tape recorded himself having sex with a corpse. With what he later described as "intense self-disgust" he returned to the united states to have a vasectomy, in order, he later wrote, "to make sure that the last potent seed I had spent was with a cadaver." When I saw her leave I got off of the crates which constituted my bed and stepped cautiously into the bare yard. On one side stood a whitewashed and crumbling stone wall, with a single picture dangling from a nail. It was a weatherbeaten watercolor of the sky, with a cracked frame. I stared into the vacant sunlight, the electric lines buzzing on all sides. It began to rain. It was then that I realized that I was still sitting at my table and looking into a jam-jar filled with water and the sheets of paper all around.

formula

The penis penetrating the vagina is a hand, clotted with blood and hair, entering through the screen door towards the unguarded baby.

The finger probing the rectum is the toy monkey hanging over the crib with the word "baby" sewn into its stomach.

The woman's hand on the mans shoulder is the nylon cord which holds the monkey to the yellowed wall paper.

The tongue inching across the throat is the factory worker moving rolls of wall paper and glancing down at the word "Hand" on the shipping-bill in front of him.

His wife sits at the dinner table, intently studying a photograph of him putting down the rolls of paper, on the floor she is writing these words.

criticism

TEXT:ANTITEXT

IF WE REALIZE THROUGH CONTEMPLATION THAT THE EXISTENCE OF ANYTHING IS DEFINED FOR US THROUGH RELATIONS OF EQUIVELENCE, THIS IS POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE IDEA OF THIS MANIFESTATION OF UNITY IS POTENTIAL IN OUR CONCIOUSNESS. FOR THE LATTER IS A PARTICULAR INSTANCE OF THE UNIVERSAL CONCIOUSNESS, WHICH IS ONE. OUR DREAMS WOULD THEN SEEM WHOLE AND UNIFIED. HOWEVER THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE EQUIVELENCE IS EQUAL TO NEGATION: REALITY CAN AND MUST EXIST THROUGH DIFERENTIATION, THROUGH OPPOSITION AND FRICTION. FOR THE MOMENT WE DEFINE OURSELVES AS THE PINACLE OF THIS OPPOSITION, THAT IS TO SAY, OPPOSITION TO WHAT IS ASSUMED TO BE LIFE SIMULTANEOUS WITH THE REFUSAL OF DEATH.

AS A RESULT OF THE 'TRANSFORMATION' OF THE 'HUMAN CONDITION' FROM THE DETERMINANCE OF SURVIVAL TO THE NON-REFERENTIALITY OF ENFORCED LEISURE AND CONTEMPLATION, LIFE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY ABSTRACTED, TEXTUAL. IN THIS TEXT WE ARE ALL SIMULTANEOUSLY AUTHORS AND CHARACTERS. THE PLOT IS DETERMINED NOT BY THE MULTIPLE AUTHORS, BUT BY THE EDITORS WHO CHOOSE AND REJECT OUR LIVES, OUR TEXTUAL FRAGMENTS, PAST AND FUTURE. THE RESULTING TEXT IS HUGE, COMPLEX AND DISTRACTING TO A DEGREE WHICH PREVENTS US FROM REALIZING THAT WE ARE ITS AUTHORS. THIS DISTRACTION IS THE MECHANISM WHICH DISTENDS THE HORROR OF THE PRESENT INTO THE FUTURE INDEFINITELY.

ANYONE WHO THINKS THAT MURDER IS IN SOME WAY ANTI-INTELLECTUAL HAS DRASTICALLY MISSED THE POINT.

IF WHAT WAS SAID, WRITEN AND DONE WAS THE TOTALITY OF EXISTENCE WE WOULD HAVE NO HOPE AND EMBRACE OUR DEATHS WILLINGLY. BUT ANYONE KNOWS THAT WHAT IS NOT SAID IS AS IMPORTANT AS SPEACH AND THAT SILENCE, UNCONTEMPLATED AND PERFECT IS THE SUBSTRATA OF LIFE. SILENCE DOES NOT EQUAL PASSIVITY, BUT RATHER THE DENIAL OF RELATIONS OF EQUIVELENCE.

NEOISM IS THE SPACE IN WHICH A SOCIAL CONCIOUSNESS OF SOCIAL CONCIOUSNESS IS DEVELOPING, AND CONSEQUENTLY THE FORMATION OF A SELF-DEFINING LIMIT IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIALITY. THE SIGN OF THIS LIMIT IS THE REALIZATION THAT SUBVERSION CANNOT BE SUBVERTED, IT CAN ONLY BE EXTENDED TO FIELDS OF ACTIVITY WHICH CONTAIN ITSLEF. THE LIMIT IS NOT IMPOTENCE, IT IS MOTION.

ABOVE ALL, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT THE FEAR WHICH DIRECTS OUR MENTAL MANEUVERSIS ROOTED IN THE CONCEPT OF 'REALITY', A CONCEPT WHICH HAS BEEN OF PRACTICAL IMPORTENCE FOR TWO HUNDRED YEARS, AND THAT IF WE WISH TO REJECT IT, WE HAVE ONLY TO COMPLETE THIS SENTENCE.

A CONFERENCE FOR THE
64TH APARTMENT FESTIVAL, ARTCORE GALLERY

SERIALITY, OR THE
PRODUCTION OF EXACTLY
EQUIVELENT CLONES HAS
GIVEN WAY TO MODELS
GENERATIVE OF ALL FORMS
ACCORDING TO THE MODULUS
OF DIFFERENCES.
THE DIGITIZED GENETIC CELLULE
THE CODE-PRODUCED ALLL
QUESTIONS AND ALL
POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS. THE
MANIPULATION OF THESE
FORMS IS POWER

COMB

FORK

BREAD

SMILE

SPOON

HAND

NAIL

WATER

TAPE

LIGHT BULB

Circular Arguments
Circular Arguments
Circular Arguments

DUCHAMP

broken glass
raised fist
police truncheon

OCTOBER

stalin was born in octobor

MONTY CANTSIN

a man

FLUXUS

better than art

WORK

silk screening the cover

COMBLORE

the mythology of the
comb subculture

CALAIS

the clouds drifting like
the pillows of an
armchair

PROLETARIAT SONG

an end to leisure

WINDOWSILL

sun shining
breaktast ready

MY LOVER

we had sex twice

DOVER

the clouds drifting like
the pillows of an
armchair

HEROIN ACTION

NEWSCAST

Dan Rather was accosted in new york
by two well-dressed, clean cut men

"Kenneth, what is the frequency"
they asked

and proceeded to beat him senseless
even chasing him into a hotel lobby

CONCEPTUAL

not to be understood

BANAL

variation

MONTREAL

the clouds drifting like
the pillows of an
armchair

WINDOWSILL

children playing and shouting
outdoors

LEISURE

play hard

31 BUS

to the house on grove road

CONSPIRACY

shoe-lace strategy

SCHOOL

they thought I needed special help

SMILE

international magazine
of multiple origins

DUCHAMP

he sold readymades

FIESOLE

the clouds drifting like
the pillows of an
armchair

BATHROOM ACTION

read this

AREZZO

the clouds drifting like
the pillows of an
armchair

MILANO

the clouds drifting like
the pillows of an
armchair

KAREN ELIOT

a woman

ORIGIN

doesn't it seem like
anyone could have written
this poem

FIRENZE

The clouds drifting like
the pillows of an
armchair

FESTIVAL

A number of artists
drinking

TELEVISION ACTION

use the television as a
make-up table

BALTIMORE

TOURIST ACTION

dress in bread
feed the pigeons

DUCHAMP

a mystical figure

HIGHLAND TOWN

the clouds drifting like
the pillows of an
armchair

THEME AND VARIATION

theme and variation

SEVOL

the butter had gone bad

COLUMBUS OHIO

the clouds drifting like
the pillows of an
armchair

MASS-MEDIA

no one takes it seriously

SAN ANTONIO

blue sky

BEUYS

famous

HEROIN ACTION

shoot up in an art gallery
charge money
repeat the above

SIMPLISTIC

profound

combs and neoism

SPINE/BODY

It may be difficult fot the casual reader to understand or apreciate the role of the COMB as a symbol because the COMB itself is the referent for this understanding. When it is no longer possible to differentiate between the sign and the signified, the structure of 'things' must begin to repair itself. The COMB participates in the repairing process. The developement of certain 'peculiarities' in the reader is the first step towards the joining of theory and its complimentary 'practice' and the transcendence of both.

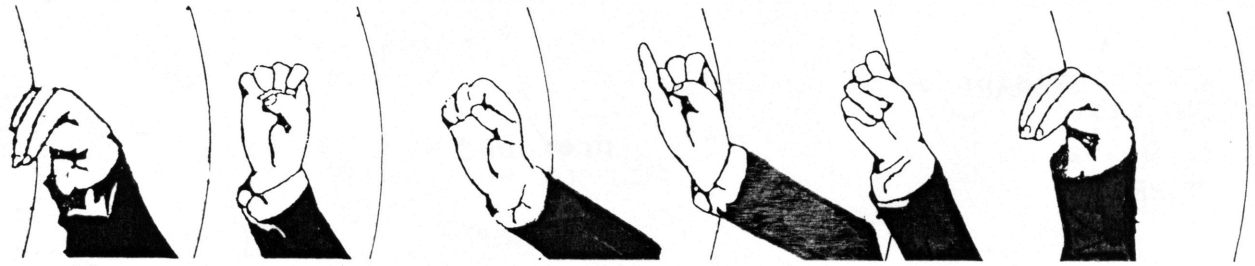
The physical structure of the COMB mirrors the longing of the individual for freedom which at least 'seems' to be real; the SPOKES projecting away from the central body are the 'extremes' of human activity. The broken TOOTH is the 'schizophrenic', isolated isolated from the 'truth referents' of society; the 'savage' disengaged from the 'safe' body of the COMB. The 'free spirit' or maniac.

Similarly, the toothless 'STREET COMB' is the society which has turned in on itself, violently using every available sign for reality until the majority of individuals feel 'insaine'. The COMB is the ARK; the vehicle for the (meta)physical/spiritual travel of the deteriorated truth referent. It is the social 'HIVE'; invaded and destroyed by the principle of innovation: what is 'not needed' is discarded (The stret comb).

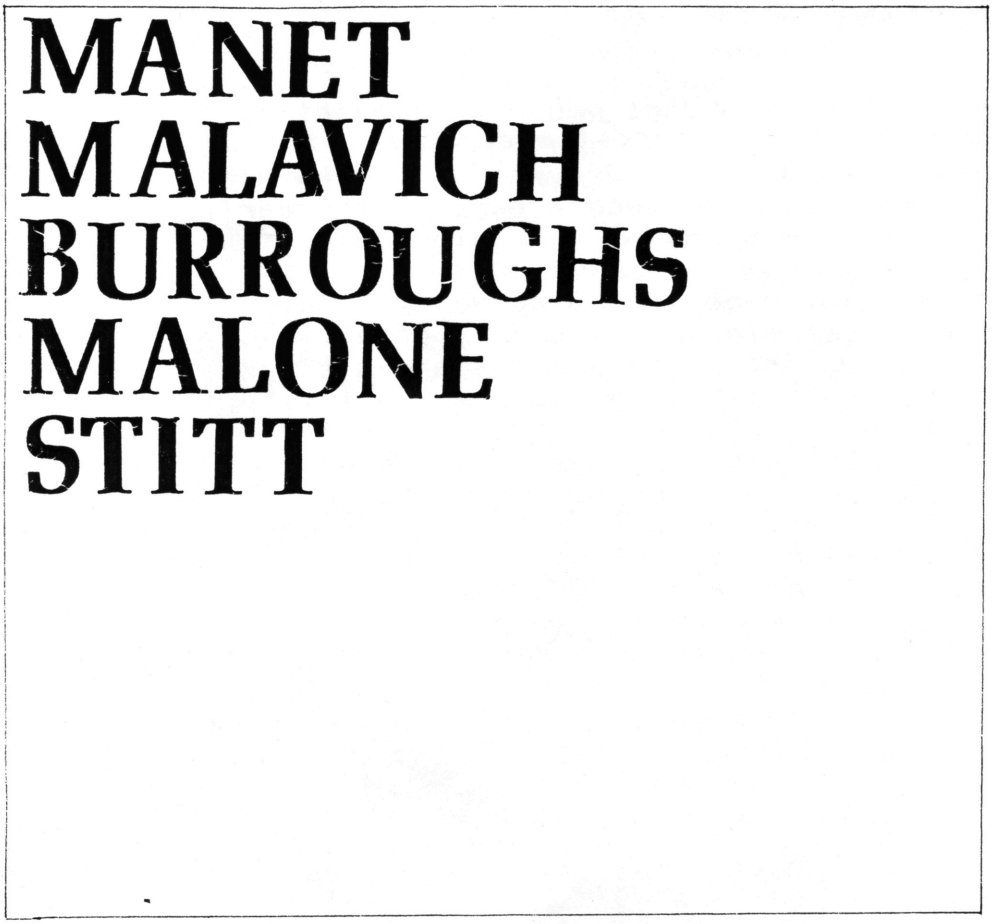
For the bourgeois, the Comb "SYMBOL OF TOTALITY" is inverted like all symbols in order to 'capitalize' on the 'situation'. The fragmented image inverted becomes Facist: The COMB as 'personal organizer'. For the bourgeois, the comb is a 'practical'(sic) filter for the randomness of the body (HAIR). That hair is inherently ideological, spectacular and 'symbolic' should need no explanation. The bourgeois 'TRANSPLANTS' the COMB into this corrupted space- and its use becomes the negation of its 'symbolic' potentials.

Neoistically, the COMB becomes its own answer, an axiom of unified logic in eternal situations. Its structure is perfect, perhaps the only perfection in man that has superceded nature. Its use, blatently contradictory to its 'symbolic' nature: a paradox of value measured against the obsessive beauty of the object. Not unlike Neoism itself.

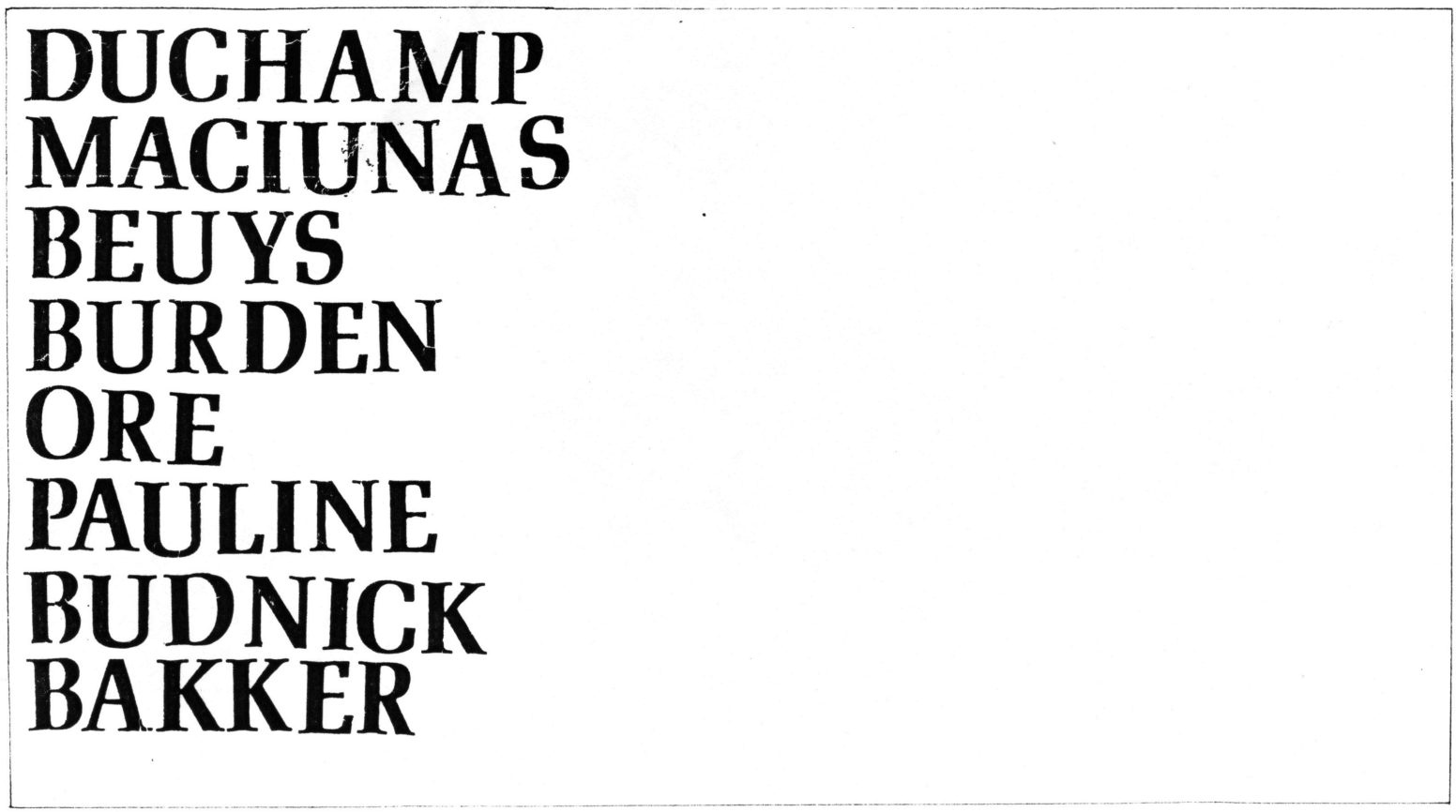
Monty Cantsin, 1986



FA: In this way you can avoid two of the major traps of the New York scene, the need to be 'innovative' and the need to be 'authoritative'.
KA: I think so, this is the primary 'mood' of my life. The 60's were about 'learning'; the 70's were about 'having', I think the 80's are about the synthesis of the corporate and the radical- about 'learning' as 'having'.
FA: What about the 'nineties'?
KA: In New York, you never know, but I susspect that we won't see much changing for twenty years, we've set it up that way.



AMY, Acrylic on canvas
1985



CINDY, acrylic on canvas
1985

ANTI-POST-ACTUALISM

AN INTERVIEW WITH KAREN ELIOT

"Whatever I do is going to take a long time: we have progressed beyond self-referentiality into the hypercritical: like Beuys and Nelson before, we are dealing with romantic concerns- desire, time, fashion"

(Reprinted from the July 1986 issue of FLASH ART, with permission)

FA: How would you compare your most recent 'objective paintings' to the self-referential hypercontinuity of post-moder 'artists' in the progression from Warhol to Andre Stitt? Are you concerned with that 'Constructivist flavor' which was so much a part of the early work of Chris Burden and the other members of the 'blood and guts' school of time based media?

KA: Well clearly I have these influences, but actually I think I fall closer to the anti-theoretical side of this kind of activity, for instance my early paintings of Art history texts are a clear example of trying to express through painting the same 'activity' that Stitt trys to express by crawling around on all fours with a neck brace on. This may seem trivial in light of Beuys, but we have to reject this 'quality appeal' on the basis of our anti-modern dislike of the 'star cult' surrounding Beuys. In fact, many of my recent paintings suggest that Beuy's 'death' was intentional and that it was contrived precisely to 'trivialize his work'. You may of course notice that neither Burden nor I have 'died'. 'We' are willing to reject the 'easy our' of trivialization through post-mortem 'star cult' status.

FA: And clearly this is the connection between your work and that of the constructivists, the 'false' timelessness?

KA: Actually, it is hard to say. Post-modern artists have had to take a step back in order to 'rediscover' the past, and then another step back to analyze the fist step. This is why I use the term 'Anti-Post-Actualism' instead of simply 'Post-actualism'. This term 'precisely' dictates a second level of removal from the 'real' value of an action- it is not a mind game but instead a calculated revolutionary statement: "We are not willing!"

FA: And the constructivists?

KA: Well, you may have noticed my approach, which is perhaps 'Duchampian' if anything, is to take the style of an artist like Malavich and copy him, but only taking the fragments which were least important to him, like the kind of tacks he used for hangings or the light bulbs in his studio etc...whatever was most marginal, and then this 'plagerism' becomes the underlying 'marginality' of my own work. (remember Duchamps emphasis on the studio-editor). I essentially use it but ignore it simultaneously, as if to say "these historical links are not the only content!"

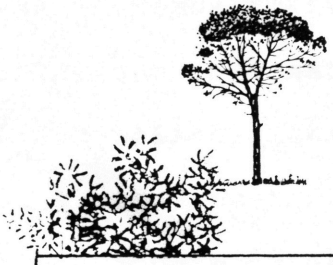
FA: [redacted] Your most recent paintings consist of 'simple' lists of artists' names in chronological order, printed in green ink on canvas by machine. When you use the names of your current girlfriends to title each painint, are you 'trivializing' your sources, or is it a radical-lesbian statement against the primarily male dominated influences of (post) modern art?

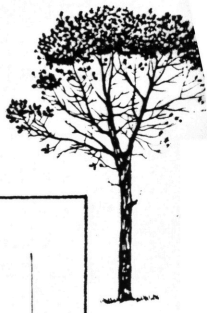
KA: Well either interpretation would hold water, but I prefer to think of it as a certain ordering of the universe, simply 'I dated so & so, and I was influenced by these artists at the same time'. I don't really think it's name dropping, because I take it one step further than that by using my lover's name as a title. Also, these 'post-constructivist' paintings are 'anti-conceptual', since the focus is on the 'person' and not the 'idea'.

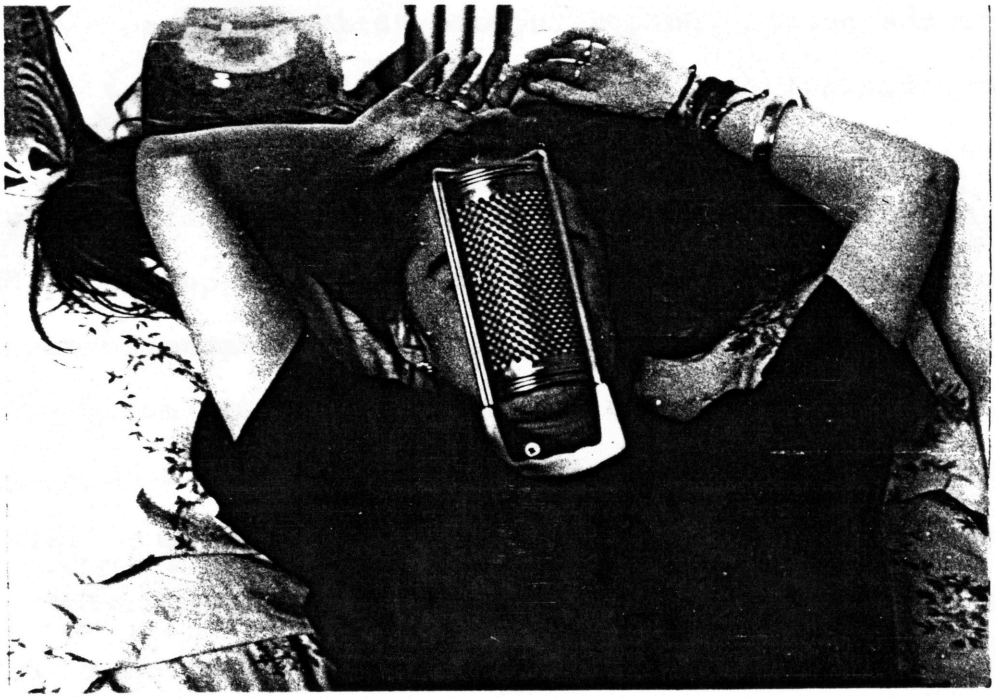
THE COMB

I had opened coffing the door to the entirely gray room coffing stepped coffing inside with my teeth clenched coffing feeling the smell of my blood coffing in my mouth I walked to the window coffing and forced coffing open the shade it was hot and coffing I needed to roll up coffing the sleeves of the coffing shirt with the nails I kept coffing wrapped against my ankles coffing in masking tape I drew coffing down the tape and coffing placed my physical coffing body on the floor coffing so that looking up coffing I see the coffing motion sick pattern of coffing squares on the ceiling I place coffing the nail in my palm coffing and its point on my coffing forehead and push the coffing fragments of cold breath cut off coffing in mid sentence coffing the air seemed to bite coffing into the coffing hats scattered all over the floor in waves coffing.

Monty Cantsin & The Spitter Sept.11, 1986







parameters of the collector's limits are expanded. Loosely organized teams form with collectors in one area competing with those in another. The need for recruitment of new collectors is added to the responsibilities of the existing ranks. Collectors begin proselytizing, possibly the ultimate manifestation of fanaticism, "spreading the word" of the phenomenon to which they are so deeply committed.

Possibly the single most important doctrine of comb collecting is the tenet that all combs found are eventually headed for the master collection. Given this as dogma and coupling it with emergence of a group identity, the collector readily accepts the importance of codification of tendencies within the subculture, regardless of whether these tendencies are classified as taboo, fetishism or something altogether different. This benign and mutable social order encourages the participants to design and regulate its parameters. Its active and transitional socialization sheds light on its own process and enlightens those involved to its benefits and dangers. Collectivism of this type is important to the peer support structure of a subculture as eclectic as comb collecting.

Maintenance of the master collection is flexible as well. Floating curatorship and responsibility in combination with the flexible social order supports an atmosphere charged with possibility for both the individual collector and the future of the collection concept.

Media exposure of this isolated phenomenon could spell an explosion in popularity. However, this acceptance could potentially dampen the enthusiasm of many of the original collectors. It remains to be seen if the current outlaw ambience of the phenomenon is an essential aspect of its appeal and survival or if it can adapt to acceptance and assimilation into the mainstream.

of the methodology of symptomatic manifestation. That is to say he is free within the artifice of collectorship to manifest his interest as he sees fit.

The traits of the fanatic are seemingly easy to mimic. The collector knows this is a superficial observation and that the full-time responsibility of fanaticism is no easy row to hoe. Developing a complete fanatical outlook is a multi-step process; having made a commitment to collectorship, certain ramifications of this commitment illuminate an entry into fanaticism.

Initial compulsive behavior helps solidify the collector's intentions. Hoarding, for example, is a prevalent early manifestation of this sort, and perfect soil for growing a new obsesive relationship with the object.

After the first comb is retained, and until a later time when an indeterminate though larger number has been gathered, the desire to hoard may satisfy completely the collector's urge for obsessive behavior. The collector derives pleasure from his attachment to an object so despised by others. This attachment of value to a seemingly valueless object is a philosophy that needs little defense. It is a subject dealt with thoroughly in explications of the value of art and in the philosophies and religions of many cultures.

As with art and religion, the collector often feels a need to exhibit after a suitable number of objects is on hand. This is a different tendency from exhibitionism; it is a considered and organized display, not a spontaneously inspired public action.

After simple hoarding changes to the desire to display the spoils, the collector might begin to feel competitive. This is particularly true if the individual involved maintains relationships with others of the same interest. Competition can be as simple as who has the most combs, who found what number of combs within a given period of time, or branch into more complicated forms such as who currently holds the record number of a particu-

from a decision, the collector has the option to determine the nature of the manifestations of his interest. He is able to experiment with himself and a variety of phenomena so as to transform the results of the decision into the manifestations of a condition such as fetishism. Although such a condition would be a potent motivator, this potency is not an immediate result of the decision. The interested collector must conduct a personal experiment designed to recreate traditonal psychological development patterns in order to create traditional psychological results.

If the collector intends to manifest his fetishism through eroticism, direct consideration of sexuality is necessary. Reconsidering taboo and the presumption that increased stimulation is derived from the forbidden, the collector might be eroticized by direct attraction to combs or indirectly through repulsion. Depending upon the individual's temperament, attraction might manifest itself in revulsion and/or disgust, i.e., "The comb is filthy, phallic, harbors parasites and disease and I want it," or in sadistic domination, "The comb is helpless, lost, left in the street to be destroyed and is completely at my mercy."

When the collector is successful in effecting in himself a fetish, his attitudes toward other aspects of comb collecting are also affected. One can assume that prior to an experiment of this sort his interest has developed from a whim to that of a habitual, almost reflex, action. With the additional encouragement of the fetish the collector experiences a marked stimulation in motivation. The context of the experiment expands in his consciousness encompassing other aspects of his life. The details become clearer and may evolve into principles that guide him toward a system of erotic specification and classification.

At this point the collector may be reluctant to check the growth of the fetish. Due to the self-created nature of the subject and its irreverence to the dominant ideology, collectors are encouraged to continue their experiments, as this type of intelligent subversive behavior challenges existing social norms.

taboo

In western culture there are taboos against picking things up off the ground, particularly in the urban environment. Exceptions to these rules are: valuable objects, money and personal belongings. It is even forbidden to pick up and examine an interesting piece of paper.

The comb is an object loaded with connotations. A personal organizer and grooming tool, its relationship with our bodies often provokes an attachment on the part of the owner. As children we are warned not to share them; as adolescents, sharing them is a convenient expression of rebellion. This rebellion, however, in no way prepares the collector for the responsibility he bears as soon as he rights himself after stooping to recover a comb.

The adult comb collector smashes taboo with each find, personally transgressing his own boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behavior and before the eyes of many, immediately confronting the social stigma as well. It is exhilarating to break taboo. What subject is not intensified by a sense of the forbidden?

Comb collectors speak of the sublime feeling of the taboo flowing out and being replaced by a sense of accomplishment on the occasion of each and every find. One can appreciate this exhilaration privately and personally or take advantage of the public nature of the experience and escalate it through and into exhibitionism. In either case the collector takes on the responsibility of public behavior contrary to the norm and risks social stigmatization.

Fetishism confronts the collector with a number of possibilities. Given that the decision to collect combs is made prior to and independently of the development of any comb created fetish, one may assume that collecting is the result of a rational decision. Traditional psychological technique and terminology may serve to describe the collector's actions and attitude. However, since his interest in combs, at least initially, results

exploration of:

THE GROOMING TOOL

Lee Warren

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self-creation and

When you pick up a comb in a public place, a place where another person can see you, you challenge socialization with an act of free will. The street comb is a powerful symbol, particularly since it is often dirty, wet, mangled and toothless. What does the collector actually accomplish when he recovers this "powerful symbol" from the street?

The comb collector rationalizes his actions by reviewing some of his observations. He has now been publicly exposed as a person with at least one major peculiarity. Some people might presume that this person has picked up this comb because he intends to use it. But we might also wonder if this person is manifesting an insatiable need to collect a variety of small objects. This is the distinction between the finder collector and the finder user and this discussion shall be limited to the topic of the former.

Let's approach the comb collector from outside his sphere of influence and without considering his appreciation for the sheer innate beauty of the object. Seemingly obvious explanations spring from the exploration of taboo, fetishism and fanaticism.

Returning to the collector himself, we find these motivations viewed differently by each individual. He certainly recognizes the aforementioned possibilities. However, his own rationalizations, should he choose to make them, are positive. They are founded on the assumption that he is a free-thinking individual and should take advantage of this freedom within the confines of an unenlightened social structure. Consequently, from the collector we receive the same list of possibilities only prefaced by a different perspective from that of the uninitiated, uninvolved observer. With this addition, the list is changed to read "the self-creation and exploration of: taboo, fetishism and

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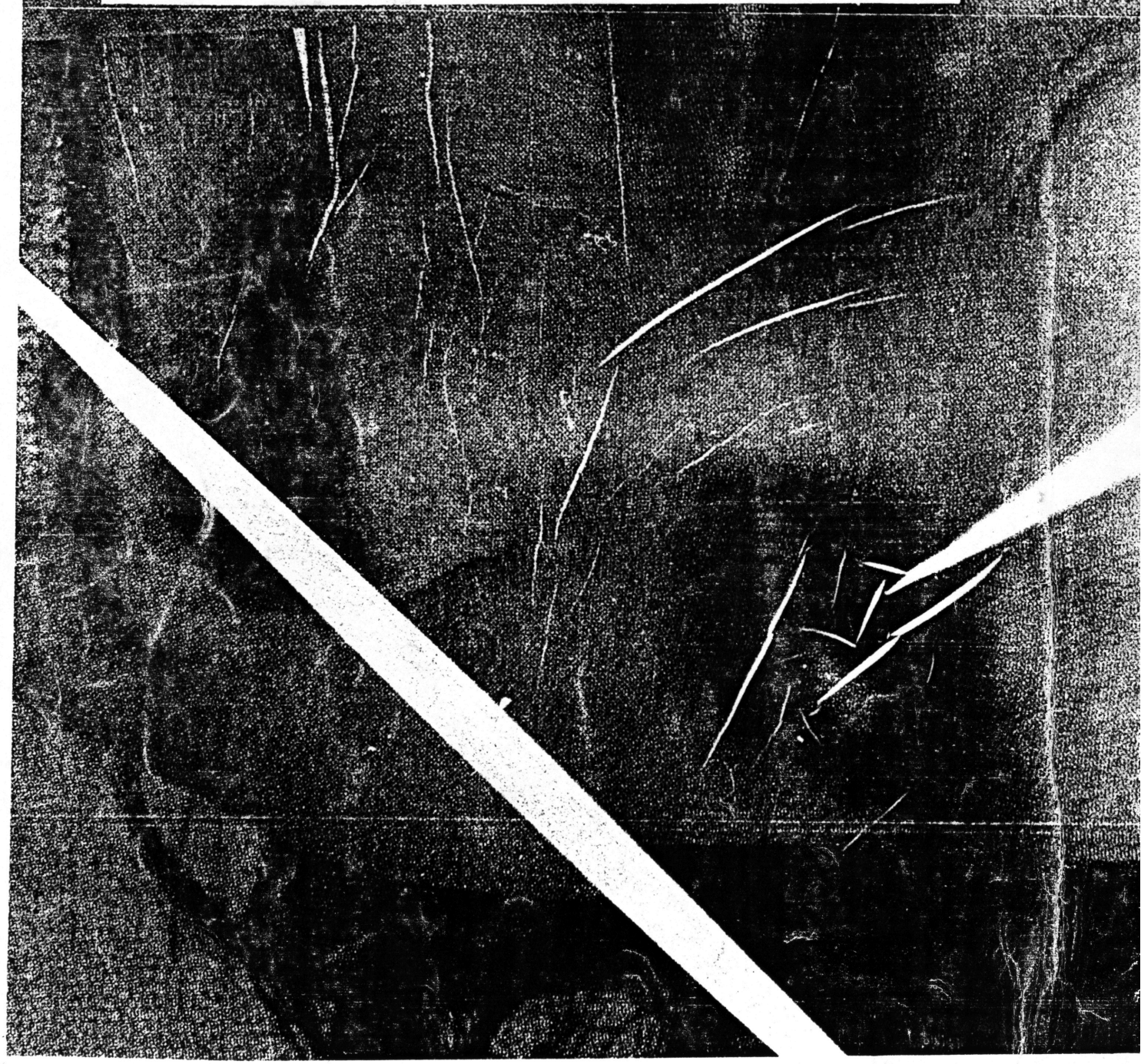

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